

# CORRECTED VERSION

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into budget estimates 2011–12

Melbourne — 17 May 2011

#### Members

Mr N. Angus

Mr P. Davis

Ms J. Hennessy

Mr D. Morris

Mr D. O'Brien

Mr M. Pakula

Mr R. Scott

Chair: Mr P. Davis

Deputy Chair: Mr M. Pakula

#### Staff

Executive Officer: Ms V. Cheong

#### Witnesses

Hon. N. Kotsiras, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship,

Mr H. Akyol, Interim Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission;

Mr M. Duckworth, Executive Director, Citizenship and Resilience, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

#### Explanation of Acronyms used

VMC — Victorian Multicultural Commission

ECCV — Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria

DPC — Department of Premier and Cabinet

OMAC — Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship

CMY — Centre for Multicultural Youth

**The CHAIR** — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearings on the 2011–12 budget estimates for the portfolio of multicultural affairs and citizenship. On behalf of the committee I welcome the Honourable Nicholas Kotsiras, MP, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship; Mr Hakan Akyol, interim chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission; Mr Mark Duckworth, executive director, citizenship and resilience, Department of Premier and Cabinet; and Ms Leah Bramhill, project officer, Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, who will be operating the presentation only. Members of Parliament, departmental officers, members of the public and the media are also welcome.

In accordance with the guidelines for public hearings I remind members of the public that they cannot participate in any way in the committee's proceedings. Only officers of the PAEC secretariat are to approach PAEC members. Departmental officers, as requested by the minister or his/her chief of staff, can approach the table during the hearing to provide information to the minister by leave of myself as chairman. Written communication to witnesses can only be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat. Members of the media are also requested to observe the guidelines. I advise any members of the media who read the transcript that they should be aware of the guidelines. I am pleased to announce, more particularly for members of the media who may be listening, that this series of budget estimates hearings is being audiocast live on the Parliament's website.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. This committee has determined that there is no need for evidence to be sworn. However, witnesses are reminded that all questions must be answered in full and with accuracy and truthfulness. Any persons found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript to be verified and returned within two working days of the hearing. Unverified transcripts and PowerPoint presentations will be placed on the committee's website immediately following receipt, to be replaced by verified transcripts within 48 hours after the hearing.

Following a presentation by the minister, committee members will ask questions relating to the budget estimates. Generally the procedure followed will be that relating to questions in the Legislative Assembly. I ask that all mobile telephones be turned off or at least to silent.

I now call on the minister to give a brief presentation of no more than 10 minutes on the more complex financial and performance information that relates to the budget estimates for the portfolio of multicultural affairs and citizenship. Minister, welcome.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Thank you, Chair. It is a pleasure to be here. I am pleased to make a few points in relation to the multicultural affairs and citizenship portfolio. Before I do so can I say that one of our greatest strengths in Victoria — and why we lead every other state — is the bipartisan approach that we have to multiculturalism in this state. Other states look to Victoria for examples, so it is a great state to be in.

#### **Overheads shown.**

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — As the first slide shows, Victoria's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is a reflection of who we are and — you have heard me say this so many times — it is one of our greatest strengths. This strength provides Victoria with ongoing social, cultural and economic benefits, and provided we continue to support our cultural diversity and work together in partnership I think we will continue to lead other states. The focus, therefore, is to promote unity through diversity, to provide world-class services in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner and to make use of our human resources to allow Victoria to harness the social, cultural and economic advantages inherent in our multicultural society.

I will now outline a number of key initiatives that take advantage of our cultural diversity. Achievements in multicultural affairs in the past — in 2010–11 under the previous government — include the community grants program. These were there to support senior citizens, festivals and events. The funding was increased, and it was all about giving our communities the opportunity to manage their own affairs and to participate and be part of society. There was the \$8 million investment in Melbourne's CBD Greek, Italian and Chinese precincts for the Cultural Precincts Enhancement Fund, and there was an extra \$12 million allocation to improve the

community infrastructure across Victoria through the Cultural Precincts and Community Infrastructure Fund. All of these achievements were possible and were done because of the hard work of the VMC. Of course I wish to pay tribute to the former chair of the VMC, George Lekakis, who had the passion and the foresight to provide new programs and initiatives which helped Victoria lead the other states, as I said, in multicultural affairs.

We have a strong commitment to ensuring that Victoria does remain the harmonious multifaith and multicultural society that it is today. We need to accept, we need to celebrate and we need to maintain our different cultures while promoting social cohesion; I think social cohesion is an important part. To achieve this we will continue the whole-of-government approach to multicultural affairs. We have strengthened the independence of the VMC; we have established the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship; we have increased the funding in some areas; we have introduced the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011, which received royal assent on 10 May; and we will continue to highlight the importance of citizenship, which is vital to our cohesive multicultural society and is a core part of this government's approach to multicultural affairs.

As I said, we have introduced new legislation and therefore we have delivered on our election commitment to strengthen the Victorian Multicultural Commission. The purpose of the act was to establish the principles of multiculturalism, to provide for the establishment of the VMC, to provide for the establishment of eight regional advisory council, to establish reporting requirements for the commission and to establish reporting requirements for government departments. Once again, if you go through the act, you see that it does highlight the important concept of citizenship, which is vital to our cohesive multicultural society.

The government has re-established the VMC as a new, more independent statutory authority. The changes to the VMC will strengthen its role and independence by changing it from an administrative office to a statutory authority reporting directly to me as minister. This will enhance the commission's ability to provide candid advice to me on government services and the settlement needs of all migrants, especially newly arrived migrants. The membership of the commission will remain at 12 — 1 full-time chair, 1 part-time deputy chair and 10 part-time commissioners. One of the commissioners will be a youth between the ages of 18 to 24. There will be one representative from a peak community organisation — in this case it will be ECCV — and there will be eight other part-time commissioners. Each of those eight part-time commissioners will also chair the regional councils, so there will be a direct input into regional Victoria. The new VMC will also have additional powers to research, advise and report to me on any matter relating to its objectives.

We have also established the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship. This office will drive the Victorian government's multicultural strategic policy and program implementation and will be responsible for managing a number of projects, including the Community Grants Program, the multicultural and multifaith harmony initiative, the cultural precincts, the refugee action program, language services and the international student care service. A new unit, the settlement coordination unit, is established in DPC under OMAC to coordinate and facilitate the whole-of-government response to the needs of newly arrived migrants and refugees.

We have also included citizenship as part of this portfolio because we believe that citizenship is the basis on which to build a strong and unified society where we as individuals learn from each other and together help to forge a more inclusive and harmonious society. If you emphasise the shared values of all Victorians, it does not matter what faith you follow, there are common core values in all religions — love, compassion, friendship and a fair go for all. As long as we adhere to those common core values, we will continue to live in peace and harmony. The ultimate function of citizenship is to facilitate a socially cohesive multicultural society, one which reconciles diversity with unity.

The 2011–12 budget initiatives: there has been a 42 per cent increase in budget output for 2011–12, including \$4.4 million over four years to fund a calendar of major events; \$150 000 over three years towards a leadership program; \$650 000 to the South Asian building fund and \$480 000 over four years for the introduction of the Victorian Honour Roll; 400 000 to acknowledge and reward businesses that use a multilingual workforce; \$800 000 over four years for a range of free seminars that provide information for newly arrived migrants and refugees about their rights and responsibilities; \$2 million to fit out in 2012–13 the Antipodes centre in Lonsdale Street; and \$2 million over four years for language services.

Of course there are investments in other portfolios, including \$1.8 million over four years to CMY to establish two regional offices for multicultural youth. This initiative will provide a one-stop shop to support disadvantaged young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are living in regional

areas to become active members of our community. There is also \$0.4 million for multicultural volunteer awards to support the government's commitment to promote unity and social inclusion and \$1.6 million to assist senior Victorians to remain active members of the community.

I think my 10 minutes are up, and I will leave it at that. I am happy to take any questions.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you very much, Minister. The remaining time, which is about 50 minutes, is available for questions on the multicultural affairs and citizenship portfolio. As is my prerogative as Chair, I always lead in with my first question, and most people now know what it is; it is no surprise. But I will put it in a context, which is important: with a growing population in Victoria of people from diverse cultural backgrounds, because we have a significant migrant community, clearly population growth is a significant factor in this portfolio, and I ask the minister to advise the committee how predictions concerning population growth have shaped the budget for 2011–12 and out years in the discharge of his portfolio responsibilities.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Thank you, Chair. You are right — Victoria and Melbourne have experienced strong population growth over the last 10 years, and while the rate of increase might slow down over the years, there will still be an increase. Just last week the federal government announced a 10 per cent increase in migration intake as well as 4000 extra refugees over four years, so 1000 refugees per year. About 30 per cent of those will come to Victoria eventually. Can I say from the outset that Victoria will continue to welcome migrants and refugees. The open sign is there and will remain because, as I said at the start, cultural diversity and migrants are our base asset.

However, there will be some service delivery implications, including in the areas of language services, interpreting and translating, and also a coordinated approach to the settlement needs of newly arrived migrants, especially in regional Victoria. To help to address this, as I said in my presentation, we have allocated an additional \$2 million for language services over the next four years. I think this brings the total in language services across departments to about \$20 million to improve the quality and supply of interpreters and translators. We are also about to establish the settlement coordination unit within DPC, which is there to coordinate across government and between governments — local government, state government and the federal government — to make sure there are no gaps in terms of the settlement needs of newly arrived migrants. We have also allocated \$800 000 for a migrant and refugee rights and responsibilities program. We have \$4.4 million over four years for major events to showcase our cultural diversity, \$1.8 million to the Centre for Multicultural Youth over four years, \$150 000 for the African community for leadership programs to train the leaders of tomorrow, and also \$650 000 for the South Asian building fund. I think these go some way to help Victoria to put in place some assistance to cater for population growth over the next few years.

**Mr PAKULA** — I am just referring to your presentation and the element that relates to the VMC. Initially, could you just tell us in terms of the new composition of the commission — the new chair, the new deputy chair — I think you said 10.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — There will be the full-time chair.

**Mr PAKULA** — Deputy chair?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Deputy chair, part-time, and 10 part-time commissioners. There will be 12 all up.

**Mr PAKULA** — Those appointments will be made when?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Those appointments will be made over the next few weeks. The advertisements have gone out to mainstream newspapers and also to 38 ethnic newspapers. There is an interview panel of three people who are currently interviewing them, and recommendations will be made to me as minister on which I will then make recommendations to cabinet.

**Mr PAKULA** — Minister, when you were in opposition, you will probably remember, you were fairly critical of the VMC commissioners who were in place prior to your coming to government. I think you said that new VMC commissioners should be appointed who were not mouthpieces of the government. Are you prepared to give the committee an undertaking that the commissioners you appoint will not be mouthpieces of your government — in other words, they will not be Liberal Party members or Liberal Party friends?

**Ms HENNESSY** — Or National Party hacks.

**Mr ANGUS** — A point of order.

**The CHAIR** — Minister, just pause for a moment.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — There is no such thing.

**Ms HENNESSY** — What? There is no call for people in the National Party? Is that what you are saying?

**The CHAIR** — Mr Angus has a point of order.

**Mr PAKULA** — He might actually want to answer this question.

**The CHAIR** — I know it is late, it is Groundhog Day 8 and we have got 45 minutes to finish the day. Let us all be amicable.

**Mr ANGUS** — Thank you, Chair. I call the member's attention back to the fact that this is the public accounts and estimates inquiry and it is not the Council or one of the chambers. The point of order is in relation to the relevance of his speech.

**Mr SCOTT** — There have been a series of points of order which seem to imply — in fact overtly imply — that asking about what will happen around a publicly funded program that is actually funded through the estimates process and there is a budget appropriation, and how that agency or program will operate, somehow is not related to the estimates process, and frankly that is a nonsense. Anything that is funded in the budget is fair game for questioning about how it will operate. That is the nature of an estimates process.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, I have heard sufficient to be able to give you an indication of where I am going to rule on this. Firstly, I think the point that has been raised by Mr Angus is relevant, and the response by Mr Scott is also apposite. As I have consistently ruled, where the matter clearly falls within the purview of estimates — that is, it is a funded program of government — then it is a matter for the committee to examine.

The issue that Mr Angus is raising is the nature of the specific question which was being asked rather than whether or not questions around this issue should be permitted. So I am happy to rule and say to Mr Angus that I am going to concede that the opposition is entitled, if they wish, to pursue matters around this generally, but I am going to rule against the specific question in which, as I understood it, the member was asking about giving guarantees that something may or may not happen. I do not think that is an appropriate question relating to estimates. If the member would like to rephrase the question, I am quite happy to consider it.

**Mr PAKULA** — I will rephrase the question, Chair. Minister, your presentation refers to the new composition of the commission and a new, more independent statutory authority. Given that that is the nature of your presentation to this committee, will you undertake that the VMC commissioners who are appointed will be genuinely independent of your government?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Chair, I will just give a commitment that people will be chosen on merit and on the skills that they possess, because for the 12 members of the commission we will need to have people with expertise and the talent required. I give a guarantee that they will be chosen on merit.

The other issue that was raised was in relation to the perception, and that was the reason why in opposition I was critical and I pushed for an independent commissioner to be on the commission, and that is why I have honoured that commitment. One representative of the ECCV will be on the commission to make sure and to give the perception that everything is done aboveboard. But I reiterate that people will be chosen on merit.

**Mr PAKULA** — Not so hard, was it, guys?

**Ms HENNESSY** — That should knock out the Liberal Party members, shouldn't it? I say that in jest.

**Mr MORRIS** — Minister, I take you back to your presentation, also to page 132 of budget paper 3, which refers to the \$2 million in 2012–13 for the fit-out of the Antipodes Centre. Can you indicate to the committee whether this is in fact additional money for that which was announced by the former Premier in 2009?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Chair, as you would be aware, the Brumby government did commit \$8 million for the three precincts of Lygon Street, Lonsdale Street and Little Bourke Street — \$8 million. We supported that program in opposition. We thought it was a great program because it helped three precincts to remain a focal point for many Victorians and also allowed Victorians to appreciate, understand and recognise the incredible contribution that the Italian and Chinese migrants have made to Victoria.

An additional \$2 million, on top of the \$8 million, was promised by the previous government in 2009 at the Antipodes festival in Lonsdale Street to fit out the Antipodes Centre. Premier Brumby also recommitted to this project at the PAEC hearings in 2009. A letter of offer was sent to the Greek community of Melbourne and Victoria offering the \$2 million and requesting that they sign and return the offer. That offer was accepted by the Greek community of Melbourne and Victoria, and the offer was returned to the VMC. However, there was no money allocated and no money was in the budget in the 2010–11 year, but because we supported this in opposition — we said it was a great project — we have now committed the \$2 million in the 2012–13 year towards the fit-out of the Antipodes Centre for Greek culture, heritage and language, which is going to be established in Lonsdale Street.

I know it is the same announcement, but there was no money allocated in 2009, and so there was no money, but we have now put real dollars into this budget.

**Mr SCOTT** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3 at pages 277 and 278, but more specifically I refer you to your promise in your document *The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for a Multicultural Victoria* and the reference made to formalise interschool relationships with the proposal for funding of \$280 000. Can you point out where in the budget this election promise appears?

**The CHAIR** — Sorry, what relationships? I missed that.

**Mr SCOTT** — There is a promise within the coalition's election policies for \$280 000 funding to formalise interschool relationships. I am seeking to have it pointed out to me where this promise is acquitted.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — We have always pushed for a whole-of-government approach. A lot of the policies that were in the multicultural affairs portfolio have been dispersed into other portfolios, like the Centre for Multicultural Youth. You will find it is not within my programs but is within the Office of Youth Affairs, and that program is part of the education department; it is not in mine.

**Mr ANGUS** — I refer you to budget paper 3, page 70, and the bullet point there entitled 'African community leadership'. Can you please elaborate for the committee on the African leadership program and the expected outcomes of this particular initiative, as outlined in the budget papers?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — As people will know, with any new waves of migration there are challenges, and that was the case with former groups of migrants, whether it was Greeks or Italians, Turks or the Polish— there were initial challenges confronted by migrants. Being a migrant who arrived here in 1964, I can attest to the fact that there were challenges, and today is no different. Today challenges are faced by new arrivals, including those who arrive from the different parts of Africa.

Therefore we have committed a total of \$150 000 over three years to assist in developing confidence, leadership skills and independence across Victoria's diverse African communities. The program is about a series of seminars which focus on advocacy, mentoring, grant writing and media engagement. It is about building the capacity and the independence and it is about feeling part of the community.

Last week I had the pleasure of working with Senator Kate Lundy, who is the federal Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. We worked together in a spirit of bipartisanship, we met with a group of young Sudanese to find ways through these challenges, and after a few hours of discussion a young Sudanese youth got up and thanked both Senator Lundy and myself for putting our political differences aside and coming together to try to assist them. I think we gained a lot from that meeting, and I look forward to working with the federal government and putting politics aside to make sure that our newly arrived migrants do get the attention and the programs that they need to be part of our Victorian community.

**Ms HENNESSY** — Minister, if I can just refer you to budget paper 3, page 66, which outlines funding for the government's election commitments in your portfolio. I refer to your announcement promising \$100 000 to

the Victorian Cypriot community, and I was just wondering where the group's funding allocation is in this year's budget.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — That \$100 000 to the Cypriot community is for their 80-year celebrations, which occur in 2013-14, and I promised them in opposition, as part of our policy, that they would get the \$100 000 as part of the \$1.1 million per year that we have set aside for events and festivals. So there is \$1.1 million a year—\$100 000 per month, and so when the 80-year celebrations come up in 2013-14 they will be allocated \$100 000 to celebrate their contribution to Victoria.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — Minister, I take you to budget paper 3, page 66, and among the key investments in multicultural affairs is \$4.4 million, at \$1.1 million over each of the four years, to be spent on a calendar of major events, and I ask you, Minister: could you outline the benefits that this program will deliver?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — As you know, there is a large pool of money for programs and events currently, which was put there by the previous government. They were worthwhile and we support them. They are ethno-specific based and are there to assist the communities to organise events and festivals. My belief is that we should encourage people to come together, so different groups come together and celebrate their cultural differences but also to understand and appreciate other cultures. So we put up \$1.1 million over 12 months, which is \$4.4 million over four years, to encourage groups to come together.

For example, at the Premier's gala dinner, for the first time I managed to get a Greek dancing group to hold hands with a Turkish dancing group to perform together for the night. People were standing, applauding and saying what a wonderful event it was. This money — the \$1.1 million — is about that. It is about bringing communities together.

For example, my mother might attend a Greek event at the local park, but if there is a Chinese event or an Italian event going on, she might not attend. However, if the Chinese team up with the Greek community and do a combined event, she might turn up and witness something that she has never seen before. So the \$1.1 million for these events is for bringing the communities together, for appreciating that we live in Australia, one nation, and we are all part of a family. It is about bringing people together.

**Mr PAKULA** — Minister, my question is similar to the one Ms Hennessy asked a few minutes ago. Prior to the election you made an announcement about providing \$100 000 towards a new Hellenic festival in Oakleigh. I am wondering if or where in the budget that is funded or whether it will be something that will be dealt with in the future.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — The \$100 000 is in the budget. It is the \$1.1 million for the events and festivals, which I outlined before.

**Mr PAKULA** — It is out of that?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — What happened was that the previous government promised \$1 million for Oakleigh, for the mall to be upgraded into a Greek precinct.

**Mr PAKULA** — Eaton Mall?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Yes. I said that that was fantastic and that I supported the \$1 million, and I said, 'When it is completed, we will provide \$100 000 for the celebration of its opening'. So that will go hand in hand. When it is completed the \$100 000 will go towards a celebration in Eaton Mall.

**Mr PAKULA** — But there will not be a specific allocation — —

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — It is part of \$1.1 million, so @100 000 of that, for that particular year, will come out. Individuals and groups can put in applications for the remainder.

**The CHAIR** — I refer you, Minister, to the departmental mission statement on page 277 of budget paper 3, and I ask: what is the government doing in terms of delivering whole-of-government services and programs in relation to multicultural affairs and citizenship?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — I think it is important that we deal with this issue across government. Every government department has a responsibility. Every government department should be responsible for the needs of all Victorians; they should not be placed in silos. It is important that governments have a big-picture view, and it is important that we continue to have a whole-of-government approach to multicultural affairs. As such, the Multicultural Victoria Act, which was recently passed, allows the VMC to monitor service delivery from departments across government. The VMC also has the power to investigate any systemic failure of any department.

The new regional advisory councils will monitor services at the regional level, and the act requires all departments to report annually to Parliament about how they have met the needs of our diverse community. There is the interdepartmental committee, which is made up of senior public servants who will meet to ensure that there are no gaps in services. It is important, as I said from the start, that it is a cross-government, all-of-government approach, and I think we have put measures in place to make sure that happens.

**Mr SCOTT** — Minister, I refer you again to budget paper 3, pages 277 and 278, but also to *The Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition Plan for a Multicultural Victoria*, page 4, in which you commit to organising a volunteer acquaintance day for people of CALD backgrounds to raise awareness and celebrate the contribution of volunteers. I would be grateful if you could point out where this program has been funded in the budget and when the first volunteer acquaintance day will be held.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Page?

**Mr SCOTT** — 277 and 278, but more particularly page 4 of your policy document.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Once again this program has moved to another department. It was part of my policy at the last election, but because we wanted to make sure it was whole of government approach and to take it out of the silos, we wish to make every department responsible for the needs of all Victorians. If you look at the Department of Planning and Community Development, it should be there.

**Mr PAKULA** — So that would be the minister for community development?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Planning or community development.

**Mr PAKULA** — No, but which actual minister? I think it would be community development.

**Ms HENNESSY** — We do not have a community development minister.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister, have you concluded? That is fine.

**Mr MORRIS** — Minister, I refer to page 66 of budget paper 3 and the item 'International Student Care Service', \$3.7 million, and I ask: how will this funding assist international students who come to study in Victoria?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — As you know, the current government is committed to welcoming students from all origins and offering them world-class education. Currently we have over 100 000 international students studying in Victoria. International education is one of Victoria's largest export industries, generating approximately \$5.9 billion, and we are taking action to provide the best possible opportunities for international students. We have appointed, as you might know, George Lekakis to oversee our international students sector as the executive director of the International Student Experience.

We have also recommitted to the International Student Care Service, which was established by the previous government and which we supported. It provides 24-hour, 7-day-a-week crisis support to international students across Victoria. The service has been going now for a year, and it has provided intensive support to international students who are victims of crime or who are experiencing issues which place them at risk of breaching their visa conditions. It helps them with mental health, legal, migration and health issues. We have announced further funding of \$3.7 million until 2014–15 to maintain this service. We have put programs in place to make sure that we continue to encourage overseas students to come to Victoria.

**Ms HENNESSY** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, pages 14 and 66. The outputs show that you are spending as much on the Victorian Diversity Employment Awards to congratulate businesses that promote a



multicultural workforce — and that is a good thing — as you are spending on the CALD job bank registry, which facilitates multicultural employment. Don't you think it is unusual that you are proposing to spend as much handing out awards as actually finding jobs for migrants?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — I think it is important that we provide acknowledgement of and reward individuals who are a big part of the community and who show leadership and inspiration for others to follow. I think that is important, especially with newly arrived migrants because some have not got the support base that others find when they first arrive here. That is very important. At the time when the policy was being implemented it was about jobs, because one of the issues with newly arrived migrants is of course jobs. It is about outcomes, and it is about achieving the results. Ms Hennessy is talking about dollar terms, and I would like to point out that it is the end result that matters. It is about achieving the outcomes that you have put forward. I am pretty confident that the programs we have put in place are going to achieve what we have set out to achieve.

**Ms HENNESSY** — We will see that next year.

**Mr ANGUS** — Minister, I refer you to page 278 of budget paper 3, and in particular table 3.19, the output summary for 'Multicultural affairs and citizenship', and I ask: do these figures include any sunset programs?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — The overall output for multicultural affairs in 2011–2012 is \$19.6 million. This represents a 42 per cent increase on the published 2010–11 output costs of 13.8 million. The \$9.6 million includes some sunset programs that were not funded beyond this year by the previous government, and there were three. The first one is \$70 000 per annum for the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. This will ensure that the government continues to provide a total of \$250 000 to the ECCV as core funding. There was a further \$1.5 million for promoting community harmony, which was to sunset at the end of June. We have recommitted the \$1.5 million, which brings the total now to \$2 million for promoting community harmony.

There was a total of \$2 million for multicultural community grants for the senior citizens that I spoke about earlier. That was to sunset at the end of June. We have recommitted the \$2 million, which brings the total for this program to \$5.6 million for 2011–2012. This program is all about supporting our senior citizens and the multicultural events and helping the multicultural communities to feel part of society.

**Mr PAKULA** — Minister, there was an election commitment by the coalition about it funding a major expansion of languages education — languages other than English — and there was \$7 million promised to provide scholarships for undergraduate and qualified teachers to become languages-other-than-English teachers. I think your comment was that the next generation of Victorians would not be left behind, or certainly that was the comment of your party.

Anticipating you might say it is in the education output I have had a look at the election commitments under 'Education'. I cannot see it there. I also cannot see it in the commitments to be funded in the future budgets column, so I actually cannot see it anywhere either in this budget or in future budgets, in education or in multicultural affairs. Can you tell me where it is and why I cannot find it anywhere in the budget papers?

**The CHAIR** — Minister, are you able to enlighten the committee?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Yes, it is true. It is in the education portfolio, it is not in the multicultural affairs portfolio, so it will be something you need to raise with the Minister for Education. But having said that, the \$70 per student for the community language schools is to commence on 1 July of this year. So for every child who is learning a second language at a community language school that school will receive an extra \$70 per student.

**Mr PAKULA** — Seventy?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — Seventy. It will go up from \$120 per student to \$190 per student commencing on 1 July of this year. In terms of the LOTE program in schools, we said we will make LOTE compulsory from prep to year 10 by 2025.

**Mr PAKULA** — You are expecting to govern for a long time aren't you, Minister?

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — It is a very good program.

## **Members interjecting.**

**The CHAIR** — If I may interject, that is a very good note to finish on. I will move on to Mr O'Brien.

**Mr O'BRIEN** — I have some very important questions that I would like to take you to, Minister, in relation to page 132 budget paper 3. I would like you to tell me the difference in the types of projects which will be funded under two of the programs listed in the column under 'Output initiatives' for Premier and Cabinet and multicultural affairs and citizenship, the first program being the promoting community harmony program, which you just touched on, and the second being the Victorian Multicultural Commission community grants program. I wonder if you could outline the difference between those two programs.

**Mr KOTSIRAS** — The community grants program is about helping senior citizens and helping the various ethno-specific organisations to meet the needs of their members. Promoting harmony is about bringing people together and understanding other cultures and faiths. We have the Multicultural Multifaith Youth Network, we have Viva Victoria, we have the Premier's gala dinner and we have Cultural Diversity Week. It is all about understanding and appreciating other cultures that make up cosmopolitan Victoria. One is about harmony and bringing people together and understanding each other, and the other is about supporting the ethnospecific organisations to meet the needs of their members.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. In the interests of harmony and bipartisanship — and especially bipartisanship — there is consensus in the committee, and by your leave, Minister, we will bring this hearing to a conclusion.

This now formally concludes the consideration of the budget estimates for the portfolio of multicultural affairs and citizenship. I thank the minister and departmental officers for their attendance today. It has been another useful and, from my point of view, informative session. I do not think any questions were taken on notice. There will be some unasked questions, which the committee will follow up with you in writing at a later date. The committee requests that written responses to those matters be provided within 21 days. Thank you very much.

**Committee adjourned 4.43 p.m.**